

Love Sick

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Love Sick by Gracieus

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Summary:

Richie gets the flu and Eddie takes care of him.

Love Sick

Eddie really needed to clean his locker. He had been putting it off, because he knew it was going to take a while. Currently it was filled with pill bottles, empty and full, a spare set of clothes, another spare set of clothes, a spare inhaler, his second fanny pack, a forgotten art project, some comics he had borrowed from Richie, an old lunch box, and his books which were somewhere underneath all of that. He sighed and tried to get his biology book from underneath the neatly folded clothes without making his locker erupt.

“Hey Eddie, can you tell Richie to go home?” Eddie jumped at Stan’s voice and dropped his textbook. The clothes came sliding down after it and he quickly tried to shove them back to prevent everything from spilling out.

“What did he say this time?” Eddie groaned. Stan moved Eddie out of the way and started to reorganise his locker.

“A bunch of stupid stuff like usual, but that’s not it. He’s really sick and he won’t listen to any of us.” Stan said. Eddie raised his eyebrows at that. Richie was sick? Was it bad? He imagined all those germs crawling over him, infecting him. Richie couldn’t just stay in school if he was sick. What if it was bad? What if it was *really* bad?

“I’ll go talk to him right away, but what makes you think he’ll listen to me?” Eddie asked, wringing his hands. His mind was already racing and thinking of arguments to convince Richie to go home.

“I have my reasons.” Stan said ominously with a hint of a smile on his face. “He is in the cafeteria where we left him. Good luck.” Eddie nodded and Stan walked off. When he moved to close his locker, he noticed that Stan hadn’t just organised it, but colour coded it as well. “How does he do that?”

Eddie headed for the cafeteria with a knot in his stomach. When he saw Richie sitting by himself, he started walking faster. He could already tell that Richie wasn’t feeling too good. His face looked pale and he was sweating. Some of his curls were stuck to his forehead and his glasses had fogged up a little. He was trying to sit upright,

but he kept moving to rest his head on his folded arms on the table.

“Rich, what’s going on? You look awful.” Eddie said, sitting down on the chair opposed to Richie’s.

“Thanks, Eds, you know just what a guy likes to hear.”

“Don’t call me that and don’t joke about this.” Eddie said, reaching out to touch Richie’s forehead. His hand recoiled for a moment, thinking about all the germs that he could contract, but he touched him nevertheless. He definitely had a fever.

“Rich, you’re burning up. What are you doing here? You need rest.”

“I’m fine.” He said, rubbing his temples and clearly far from fine.

“Do your parents know you’re sick?”

“Yes.”

Eddie bit his lip. Richie didn’t talk about his home life, but they all knew that it couldn’t be good. He rarely had a packed lunch or money to buy something in the cafeteria. He was also still wearing his denim jacket even though it was getting really cold outside. That was probably why he had gotten sick. His parents didn’t even bother to buy him a decent coat and now they’d sent him to school with a fever.

“I’ll take you home.” Eddie announced, and he got up from his chair.

“What?” Richie asked frowning.

“I’m taking you home, come on.”

Richie looked at him for a moment, but then shrugged and got up. He nearly tripped over his own feet, but Eddie was quick enough to catch him. Richie leaned on the smaller boy’s shoulders with an embarrassed look on his face. He didn’t want to seem so weak in front of Eddie, but he was so sick he couldn’t help it.

“Are you sure you wanna skip school for me?” He asked softly. Eddie had never skipped class before, and he was praying to God that they

wouldn't call his mother, but he had made his choice. He couldn't leave Richie here and that's that.

"Yes, Rich, you're sick and someone needs to take care of you. Besides I don't want you to infect the rest of the school."

It was quite the task to get Richie home. He was too sick to walk all the way, and Eddie didn't think he could cycle home either. Eventually Eddie convinced Richie to ride double with him. Eddie had to stop several times, because he thought he had felt Richie slipping. The heat radiating from Richie was making Eddie nervous and he could hear his laboured breath. He kept thinking that if he just got him home everything would be alright. Eventually they made it to Richie's house. Eddie threw his bike down in the front lawn like they always did, because they're American and don't respect bicycles, while Richie opened the front door. Eddie followed him into the house and started thinking of a plan.

"Rich, why don't you go take a shower and I'll find you some clean clothes, okay?" Eddie proposed.

"Don't I get a sponge bath from nurse Spaghetti?" Richie teased. Eddie rolled his eyes.

"In your dreams, Trashmouth." Eddie said, pushing him towards the stairs. Richie put his hands up and started moving upstairs. Eddie followed him just to make sure that he was going to make it.

"Leave the door open just in case."

"Just in case you want to join?"

"Beep beep, Richie!" Eddie said, shoving him into the bathroom. He didn't understand why Richie was always saying such things. If he didn't know better, he'd think that Richie had feelings for him. That wouldn't be too bad; if Richie wanted to be nice, he could be really nice, and he could make Eddie feel flustered. But, he knew it was all a joke, it was a joke that Richie would actually feel that way about him.

Eddie went over to Richie's bedroom and hoped he could find him

some clean clothes. The bedroom was a complete mess, clothes and comic books everywhere. Eddie sighed, wondering how anyone could live like this. He tried to find a pair of pyjamas in Richie's closet, but apparently, he didn't wear any. Eddie found him a clean shirt, a pair of sweat pants, and some underwear.

Eddie looked at the shirt for a bit and remembered Richie wearing it a few weeks ago when they went to the Quarry and the weather was still nice. He had been teasing him too that day, so much that even Eddie's inhaler couldn't get rid of the strange feeling in his stomach. He brought the shirt to his face and smelled it, burying his nose in the scent. He stood there for a moment, before he wondered what Richie must think if he caught him like that and he quickly stopped. He put the clean clothes in front of the bathroom and hurried downstairs.

Richie was starting to feel a little better underneath the hot shower. He felt like the water was washing away his sickness along with the sweat. He ran his hands through his wet curls and scrubbed his body. He was grateful that Eddie had dragged him home even though he shouldn't have. Richie liked to take care of himself. Whenever he had needed his parents help, they had always made him feel like a burden for not being able to do it himself. Asking for help seemed like a weakness to him and he especially hated looking weak in front of Eddie. Nevertheless, it felt nice to know that someone cared for him, especially if that person was Eddie.

Richie heard Eddie run down the stairs and he turned off the shower. He got out and dried himself off. It seemed as if he was immediately sweaty again, but at least it wasn't as bad as before his shower. He opened the door and found the bundle of clothes Eddie had left for him. He hadn't worn that shirt in a while, the last time he had worn it the weather had still been nice. They had gone to the Quarry and Eddie had been wearing those ridiculous red shorts that made him look so cute. Richie grinned as he got dressed.

He walked downstairs and felt his head hurt with every descending step. Maybe he had been a little too quick to think that his shower had cured him. He walked over to the kitchen where he smelled something delicious.

“I made you soup.” Eddie announced. Richie walked over to him, taking in the delicious smell of chicken soup.

“I didn’t know we had that.” He said.

“It was stuffed away in the cupboard over there.” Eddie mentioned as he poured the contents of the pot into a bowl. “There you go, nice and hot.”

Eddie put the soup bowl on the kitchen table next to the juice box he had brought to school for lunch. He couldn’t find any orange juice in the fridge, so this would have to do.

“Thanks, Eds.” Richie said grateful. “You shouldn’t have.” Eddie shrugged and sat down across the table from Richie. He watched him attentively, trying to decide if he was already looking a bit better. He figured it was at least a good sign that he was eating. Eddie wondered how much Richie had been eating these last few days anyway, he had gotten awfully thin. The cupboards and the fridge had looked suspiciously empty as well. Eddie decided that he would start bringing extra sandwiches to school for Richie, he clearly wasn’t getting enough to eat at home.

“Take a picture, it’ll last longer.” Richie said without looking up from his soup. Eddie’s face turned red and he quickly looked away.

“I’m just checking on you.”

“And? What’s the verdict?”

“You’ll live to be a pain in my ass for many more years.” Eddie deadpanned.

“Jolly good!” Richie exclaimed and he held up the juice box to the sky. The joke resulted in a coughing fit which made Eddie tremble. For a second he was sure Richie was going to cough up a lung.

“Are you alright?” Eddie asked and he reached for Richie’s hand without thinking about it. Richie’s coughing sounded painful and lasted far too long according to Eddie. When the coughing fit finally died down, Richie’s cheeks had turned bright red while the rest of his skin looked strikingly pale. He rubbed his throat with a pained

expression on his face, and Eddie could feel his heart breaking.

“Can I go lie down?” Richie asked, his voice small and a little hoarse.

“Of course, you can.” Eddie said. He just now noticed that he was holding Richie’s hand and let go quickly. He got up and walked over to Richie to help him, hoping that he hadn’t noticed the blush on his cheeks.

Eddie walked Richie over to the couch where he had laid down all the pillows and blankets he could find. Richie smiled weakly. He couldn’t remember the last time anyone had taken care of him like this. He felt a little guilty for putting Eddie through this, especially with his germaphobia, but he couldn’t help enjoying the attention. It was a welcome change from his parents’ disinterestedness. But of course, Eddie had always been different.

Eddie turned on the TV and found a channel with cartoons that Richie liked, while his friend lied down onto the couch underneath the mountain of blankets. They sat in silence for a while, Eddie in a large armchair and Richie on the couch, while the cartoons played.

“Eds...”

Eddie hummed, but didn’t look back.

“Eds...” A little louder this time.

He turned his head and watched Richie tap the free space on the couch.

“I’m not getting on the couch with you.” Eddie said, his cheeks burning red. Why was Richie even proposing that?

“Won’t you grant a dying man his last wish?” Richie said dramatically, adding a fake cough for good measure. Apparently, that had been a mistake, and he once again rubbed his throat in pain.

“Stop being dramatic, you’re not dying.” Eddie said, but he was already getting up from his seat. Richie scooted back a little bit, making more room for Eddie on the couch. They would have to spoon to both fit onto it.

"I'll fall."

"No, you won't. I promise." Richie assured him and Eddie lied down next to him. Eddie tensed up when Richie wrapped his arm around his waist, but slowly felt himself relax. "I'll make sure you won't fall off."

Eddie was a bit scared that he would catch Richie's cold this way, but he knew it was too late to start worrying about that now. If Richie was going to infect him, he had already done so today. He squirmed a little trying to settle in and felt Richie's grip tighten.

Richie was finding it hard to stay awake. His body was doing its best trying to fight his cold and all it wanted to do now was go to sleep. His eyelids were heavy and he couldn't focus on the TV screen. It didn't help that Eddie was distracting him so much. Richie knew that he smelled nice even if he couldn't verify it with his stuffed nose. He felt comfortably warm underneath the blankets and with Eddie so close to him. He yawned and handed his glasses to Eddie who placed them on the coffee table for him. He buried his face in the crook of Eddie's neck and slowly his breathing got heavier until he fell asleep.

Eddie listen to Richie's breathing for a while, afraid to move and wake him up. He couldn't deny that he was loving this. He felt secure in Richie's arms and he wished they could stay like this forever. He started to doze off himself. He tried to stay awake. What if Richie's parents got home and they found them like this on the couch? But he was too comfortable and soon his breathing fell in line with Richie's.

Richie didn't know how long they had staid like that, but he felt a little better when he woke up. Somehow, Eddie had shifted in his sleep and they were now face-to-face. His arm, however, was still around Eddie, making sure that he couldn't fall off the couch. Richie looked at his friend and smiled. He saw the beautiful freckle dusted skin and his long lashes. His eyes lingered on Eddie's lips and it wasn't for the first time that he wondered what it would be like to kiss them. Maybe if he was quick enough, Eddie wouldn't notice? Perhaps it was the cold that clouded his judgement or the position he had found himself in, but Richie leaned forward and pressed a chaste kiss on his friend's lips.

Eddie's eyes shot open and he backed away, nearly falling off the couch if it hadn't been for Richie.

"I'm sorry I..."

"Richie Tozier, how dare you! I have been in love with you for four years now and when you finally kiss him *you infect me with the flu!* *Have you got any idea how long I have been waiting for this?! And you kiss me when you're sick!*" Eddie ranted, his cheeks flushed, and he squirmed in Richie's grip. Richie could only look at him dumbstruck. Did Eddie say he loved him? Was he having a fever dream? His heart was racing and for the first time in his life he was speechless.

"Well don't just stare at me!" Eddie pouted. "Do it again."

And Richie did. And they would kiss many times more hereafter.